



# Municipal League News

August/September 1994

The Municipal League of King County

## Election News

The League completed its annual review of candidates for local office in King County on August 30. This year 56 volunteers spent a minimum of 60 hours each evaluating 123 candidates. Committee members interviewed and researched candidates running for the 16 state legislative districts that fall within King County. Thirty-two House and 12 Senate seats are up this fall. Committee members also rated the King County Prosecuting Attorney.

In response to suggestions made by members during last year's membership survey that we mail our Candidate Evaluation Reports out earlier, we made a special effort to get the reports in the mail by September 3. Despite these efforts, we received a few calls from members who said they did not receive their report. We would like to know if there are others we have not heard from yet who did not get their report. Please call the League office if you did not receive a report.

The League's annual Election Watch Party was festive and well-attended. League members, candidates, and the media mingled as the results came in. King County Records and Elections instituted several efficiency measures, which sped up their vote counting. By 11:30 p.m. we had data from 99 percent of the precincts—significantly more votes counted than in years past.

Now that the primary election has passed, we turn our attention to the general election and evaluating ballot measures. At this time, the League anticipates making recommendations on four measures: the Seattle School District Capital Bond; Seattle Public Safety Facilities Bond; the Seattle Library Bond; and the Valley Medical Center Maintenance and Operation Levy.

The Municipal League Foundation's water report has been extremely well-received. We will be mailing copies to members of the Legislature when the session gets underway as water is likely to be a very hot topic this year.

**LARGER PRINT AVAILABLE:** If you are a member and have trouble reading our publications due to the small type, please call us (622-8333). We will be glad to provide larger print materials for you.

## Governance Committee Report

Below you will find the text of a report on the Regional Policy Committees written by the League's Governance Committee. The Board adopted this report and its recommendations on August 30, 1994.

The League met with Metropolitan King County Councilmembers Kent Pullen, Greg Nickels, and Jane Hague in early September to discuss our findings. Councilmember Pullen is the chair of the Metropolitan King County Council; Councilmember Nickels chairs the Metro Transit Committee, Councilmember Hague chairs the Regional Policy Committee. (Councilmember Cynthia Sullivan, who chairs the Water Quality Committee, was on vacation and could not meet with us, but sent a member of her staff to represent her.)

During our meeting Councilmembers Pullen and Nickels agreed to implement the League's three recommendations (see page 3). The League will continue to monitor the implementation of the County's charter amendments and the progress of the regional committees in the coming months.

We welcome comments from our members on this report. Feel free to call the League's office with your observations.

## Statement on the Regional Policy Committees

The Municipal League of King County has been monitoring the implementation of the amendment to the King County charter passed in November of 1992. In March of this year, the Trustees of the League appointed a 14-member Governance Committee comprised of knowledgeable citizens who have been active in the governance debates. The Committee has focused its efforts on the governance and policy issues related to the dissolution of the Metro Council and the expansion of the Metropolitan King County Council from nine to thirteen members. It has not studied issues related to the merging of King County and Metro administrative functions and services.

In this report, the Municipal League makes findings and recommendations regarding the implementation of the three regional policy committees created as part of the merger. These committees were intended to become arenas for debate and regional decision-making for elected officials representing the cities and the County.

So far, the League concludes that they have failed in many respects to fulfill our—and the voters'—expectations.

## Background

In February 1991, the Municipal League issued a report on governance reform in King County. It found that existing governments had been unable to deal effectively with problems of growth such as congested traffic, changing land uses, environmental damage, and the rising cost of housing. No existing jurisdiction had the authority to address the full range of regional problems because authority was split between the County, Metro, and the cities. Additionally, residents of unincorporated areas found themselves with little ability to influence services and decisions made on their behalf.

Metro was responsible for regional service provision in transit and water quality. Its governance structure was federated and included both partisan and non-partisan elected officials. Its Councilmembers were appointed without respect to party affiliation to represent cities, the County, unincorporated areas, and special districts. King County was responsible for a limited number of countywide functions, including elections, tax collection, courts and jails, and mental health. Its Council was directly elected by districts and candidates for office had to declare their political party affiliation. Cities, finally, were responsible for most local services within their boundaries. City councils are directly elected on a non-partisan basis.

The substance of the amendments to the County charter reflected a desire to improve regional decision-making and to arrive at a compromise between these forms of government. It was intended that the best elements of the federated form of the Metro Council and the direct representation of district elections be retained. On the old Metro Council, power was divided between the County and the cities and a venue existed for the County and cities to debate issues of regional interest. However, indirect selection of Metro Council members tended to discourage public discussion of Metro issues, and residents of unincorporated areas were under-represented. At the same time, it was difficult to assign new regional powers to the County as cities tended to perceive the County as primarily responsible for unincorporated areas.

A regional summit process was begun in late 1990 during which 21 representatives of the cities and the County agreed to merge Metro and King County into one regional government that would have elements of both federation and direct election, thus giving cities a voice and a vote in regional decisions. The new government was originally to be non-partisan, although a last minute change reversed the proposal on this point. This agreement was submitted to the voters in November of 1991 and failed to receive sufficient votes in the areas outside of Seattle, after the issue of partisanship caused the cities to withdraw their support for the measure.

Into this process, another factor was added: U.S. District Court Judge William Dwyer found the existing Metro structure to be unconstitutional because it failed to meet the test of "one person, one vote." At a second regional summit meeting in the summer of 1992, a new agreement was forged that abandoned the federated structure but replaced it with three regional policy committees that would include representatives of both city and county governments and that would advise the new County Council on matters of regional interest. To ensure accountability, the final decisions regarding regional policies and plans would be made by the Council. It was also agreed that the new County government would be elected based on partisan affiliations. This agreement was again submitted to the voters and passed in November of 1992.

### Since the Vote

During 1993, a new County government was designed. Thirteen new electoral districts were formed and a new, larger County Council was elected. The three regional committees were formed—Water Quality, Metro Transit, and Regional Policy—each composed of six County Council members, three representatives of the suburban cities (which could opt to appoint six members with one-half vote each), and three members of the Seattle City Council. The new government took effect in January of 1994 and is now eight months old.

In recent months, reports have appeared in the local press indicating that all is not well. Of the three regional committees, only the Transit Committee and, in some views, the Water Quality Committee have been reported to be working reasonably well. The Regional Policy Committee has been widely viewed as having made no progress. Disputes between the County

and the cities on the procedures for the committees' operation are becoming acrimonious. Elected representatives of both the County Council and the cities have stated publicly that the process of County-city consultation is not working to their satisfaction and that portions of the summit agreements are not being honored. Further, reports in the press and made directly to the Municipal League have indicated that dealings between the County and the cities have been characterized by a lack of civility, respect, and collegiality on both sides.

While these characterizations have been qualified with reference to one and sometimes two of the three regional committees, they have appeared widespread enough to cause concern and to cause the Municipal League to investigate the matter.

The Municipal League's Governance Committee in recent weeks met with Metropolitan County Council Chair Kent Pullen and with elected representatives of the County Council, the City of Seattle, and the suburban cities. Additionally, the Committee attempted to survey (in writing and by telephone) all of the other elected officials who serve on the three regional committees. Of the 36 individuals who serve on the regional policy committees, the League was able to learn the views of 22. The response rate was representatively distributed across the County, Seattle, and the suburban cities.

### Municipal League Findings

#### **Responses: Surveys and Interviews**

The responses to the League's survey and interviews indicated clearly that a problem exists. There is a widespread view that the agreements from the summit process are not being honored to the satisfaction of participating committee members. This view is shared among all of the participating jurisdictions, including the County and the cities.

A majority of the respondents felt that the regional committees they were serving on were functioning either poorly or with mixed success. Of those who thought the committees were progressing well, most responses were qualified: fairly well; beginning to make some progress; not yet to the meat of the issues, but that will come; etc. Respondents noted that the Water Quality and Metro Transit Committees are working better than Regional Policy due to their clear charges. When discussing the Regional Policy Committee, respondents expressed concern about the lack of a clear

mandate.

Those who felt that the committee were doing poorly cited a lack of trust and respect on all sides and a sense of the County's stalling and apparent unwillingness to cooperate. Over two-thirds of the respondents said the agreements from the summit process were not being honored to their satisfaction. One respondent summarized that little is being done that is consistent with the *letter* of the summit agreements and that nothing is being done that is consistent with the *spirit* of the process. An example of this cited by several respondents has been the County's unwillingness to refer issues requested by a regional committee.

A sizable majority of the respondents argued that steps need to be taken to build consensus and collegiality among participants and that building consensus would help the committees get on with substantive business.

#### **Three Problems**

On the basis of the survey, interviews, research, and discussions, the League has concluded that the problem of the regional policy committees has three elements: political, procedural, and substantive.

#### ***The political problem.***

- *Failure to meet the intent of the summit.* The intent of the summit participants and the charter amendments was to share the power between the County and cities so that regional decision-making could be more effective. This intent is not being wholly honored.

- *Power struggle.* Most County Council members agree that the mission of the Metropolitan King County Council is to make policy and plan for the entire region; however, implementation of regional policy frequently rests with the cities. Some members appear to have forgotten that planning and implementation cannot be accomplished without great good will and cooperation between the cities and the County. At the same time, city members are adamant that the County cannot tell them what to do on their own turf. Mutual distrust over who has the power to do what is strong and has led to a power struggle between the County and the cities.

- *Differences causing stalemate.* Some blame the slow progress on differences in "culture" and decision-making styles between the partisan County Council and the non-partisan cities. However, the real political problem seems to be a power struggle

between different levels of government in such cultures, partisanship, and decision-making styles play subsidiary roles. Instead of working to bridge these differences, some key participants appear to be using them to seek advantage and are actually exacerbating the problem. This power struggle has created an adversarial climate that is counter-productive to the desired regional decision-making. It will take efforts on all sides to set aside these differences and struggles.

### **The procedural problem.**

- *Procedural ambiguity.* Certain details of procedure were not clearly spelled out in the charter amendments and have been subject to varying interpretations. These include the appointment of members and alternates to the regional committees and the voting procedures of the committees.
- *Wasted time.* These procedural issues appear to have been blown out of proportion to their true significance and too much time and good will have been wasted in attempting to resolve them.
- *Delay.* In several instances, the processes of calling meetings, giving notice of meetings, canceling meetings, and setting agendas for meetings have not been handled in a manner supportive of openness, participation, and courtesy to committee members and the public.

### **The substantive problem.**

- *Unclear scope.* The scope of issues and purview of the Regional Policy Committee were not clearly spelled out in the charter amendment and the question of which matters the committee should work on has been open to varying interpretations.
- *Lack of progress.* Rather than proceeding to create a forum for resolution of the different interpretations, delays and lack of progress have marked the work of the Regional Policy Committee.

### **Discussion**

The Regional Transit and Water Quality Committees are mostly concerned with well-defined areas of service delivery, and the League has found that these committees, after some initial start-up difficulties, have largely begun working together to address their respective areas. The County and cities are familiar with working together on these subjects as they have done for many years.

The Regional Policy Committee is a "new animal" and it adds a voice and vote for the cities in arenas that were previously closed to them. Therefore, this is by far the

most challenging committee in the new government. Its purview has yet to be defined and it has emerged as a battleground in the power struggle between the cities and the County. The procedural issues have been used as a primary delaying tactic in this struggle for advantage.

They have also been used to hinder progress on substantive issues, the first of which must be a discussion of the Regional Policy Committee's scope and the development of a work plan. In the eight months of the new Council's functioning, an overall agenda of issues for the Committee has not yet been agreed upon. This concerns the citizens of King County who voted for an improved, more efficient government, not new political warfare and new opportunities for government gridlock.

The issues at stake here are about service delivery, money, and power: what services are regional, who will provide them, who will have a say in how those services are delivered, how much will they cost, and who will pay for them. The regional committees should be the forum where these matters are hashed out. Our governments in King County must do a better job of working together effectively to address them.

The Municipal League is concerned that the political, procedural, and substantive problems we have identified are fundamental threats to the success of our new governance structure and not merely start-up difficulties or reflections of differences in cultures or decision-making styles as some have argued. In any event, they are a significant hindrance to arriving at cooperative solutions for issues of importance to the people of this county and they must be resolved soon.

The Municipal League reiterates the principles articulated in its 1991 report and continues to believe that we need better regional decision-making in King County and that such regional decision-making must give fair consideration to the interests of all the parties concerned. The power politics now being played out is counter-productive and is squandering the opportunity to get on with resolving pressing problems.

### **What the League Is Proposing**

The League has sought to meet with the County Council leadership, the chairs of the three regional committees, and elected officials from the City of Seattle and the suburban cities to relay our findings and concerns as outlined in this statement. We have made the following recommendations:

- First, we recommend that Council leadership and the regional committee chairs above all seek to work toward the goal of effective regional governance, recognizing that adversarial politics, procedural game-playing, and avoidance and delay tactics will not get us there. We desire statesmanship from our regional leaders, cooperation among County and city officials, and progress on substantive issues.

- Second, we recommend that a joint meeting of the executive committees (which would each include a representative from the County Council, the City of Seattle, and the suburban cities) of the three regional committees be convened as soon as possible to resolve all outstanding procedural matters. If agreement cannot be reached within 30 days, the County and cities should participate in a dispute resolution process conducted by an independent third-party.

- Third, we recommend that the Regional Policy Committee participate in a facilitated workshop as soon as possible to determine a work plan for the immediate and near term future. The Municipal League is available to assist in identifying skilled professional facilitators to work with the committee.

During the next six months, the League will evaluate the progress that has been made in meeting these specific recommendations.

### **Conclusion**

The Municipal League is committed to exerting its resources and influence to achieve an effective regional government that can effectively address the many pressing regional problems. The League recognizes the difficulty of establishing a new government and of implementing the plans outlined in the summit agreements and the charter amendments. We respect the need to establish a fair, orderly, and legal process for doing business.

However, the League believes that more could be done to adhere to the spirit of the summit agreements and to deliver the kind of government that the citizens of King County expected when they voted to merge Metro and King County in 1992. In the end, our new government's effectiveness will likely be determined by the depth of its leaders' commitment to cooperate with each other.

The Municipal League's Governance Committee will continue to monitor the implementation of the charter amendments and consider the need for additional recommendations in the future.

Many thanks to the following members who renewed in August and September 1994, and welcome to all our new members. We appreciate your ongoing support!

**Individual Renewals**

Russell D. Amick  
 Alan R. Anderson  
 Dean T. Anderson  
 Helen Baker St. John  
 Gregory Barlow  
 Marky Barrett  
 John M. Baxter  
 J.E. Beardsley  
 Daniel Becker  
 Bonnie Berk  
 Fred Bigelow  
 M. Wayne Blair  
 J. Arthur Blakeney  
 Ann K. Bowman  
 Patricia Bowman  
 Thomas Boyde  
 Rita Brogan  
 Linda Brown  
 Steven D. Brown  
 Mary E. Browne  
 Robert F. Buck  
 Carolyn Dargatzis  
 David J. Burman  
 Alice Byers  
 Alta G. Campbell  
 Franklin Carpine  
 Palmer Chambers  
 James R. Chatterson  
 Peter Coates  
 John Cockburn  
 Josephine Lane Collins  
 Aimee Crissey  
 Fredric A. Danz  
 Allen E. Davenport  
 Joseph L. Davis  
 Sue Donaldson  
 James B. Douglas  
 Susanne Dubois  
 Alec Duff  
 W.E. Dunlap  
 Katherine Dunsmore  
 Ardis Ruth Eccles  
 Garrett Eddy  
 Marjorie Edris  
 Neil Ericsson  
 Debra Entel-Burris  
 Kenneth R. Fisher  
 Esther Fluvog  
 L.G. Fordyce  
 Eric A. Friedli  
 David Gaba  
 Rachel Garson

Steve Goldblatt  
 A.M. Gonnella  
 John A. Gose  
 Max L. Gray  
 John & Lois Griswold  
 Robert P. Groncznack  
 Eleanor M. Hadley  
 Anne C. Hallett  
 David Hamlin  
 James W. Haviland  
 Rodney & Jill Hearne  
 Robert Heller  
 Dan N. Hendricks, Jr.  
 John F. Henry  
 Ruth Hertzberg  
 Fred Herzberg  
 Jerome L. Hillis  
 Marian Hoffman Ursic  
 Philip N. Hogue  
 E.L. Holmes  
 Walter Hubbard  
 Lara Iglitzin  
 Juris Jansons  
 Victor M. Jones  
 Donald G. Kari  
 Harold S. Keeney  
 Francis & Sue Kernan  
 Paul J. Kostek  
 David Krakovsky  
 John Krausser  
 H.S. Krohn  
 Lee Kuranko  
 Karen Lane  
 Kristie Langlow  
 Emily A. Leslie  
 Verne D. Lewis  
 William A. Longbrake  
 Dorothy Malone  
 Jocelyn Marchisio  
 Kenneth Martin  
 Barbara Mauer  
 Judy McBroom  
 William McIlraith, Jr.  
 Blake D. Mills, Jr.  
 Kathleen H. Murray  
 Ken Nakatsu  
 Betty Jane Narver  
 John S. Niles  
 Eileen M. Niven  
 Dan & Diane O'Neal  
 Charlie O'Neil  
 William H. Ostenson

A.T. Ostrander  
 Joyce Papke  
 Jeannie Pierce  
 Charles Pigott  
 Alice Porter  
 Margaret Powell  
 Arthur S. Quigley  
 Theodore L. Rand  
 John W. Rants  
 J.H. Reckers  
 Jay A. Reich  
 Susan D. Reiter  
 Margaret Ryder  
 Emilie B. Schwabacher  
 Mark Scott Seymour  
 Harold Seligmann  
 Frederick Sexton  
 Jane K. Sheely  
 Norma Shortrock  
 Mark Solomon  
 Kathryn A. Spangler  
 Harry Spizman  
 Clinton S. Stanovsky  
 Lucy Steers  
 Mary Ellen Stone  
 P.A. Streeter  
 A. Donald Swanson  
 Mabel Taigen  
 Diana Thompson  
 Donald L. Thomson  
 Dean D. Thornton  
 Paul A. Toliver  
 George C. Trotter  
 Henry A. Tucker  
 Al VanKampen  
 Betty K. VanNess  
 Mark Velicer  
 D.G. Venetiou  
 P.E. Wahlstrom  
 George Wallerstein  
 Byron Ward  
 Lawrence J. Warren  
 Robert Denny Watt  
 Winifred Weter  
 Loretta M. Wheeler  
 Barbara S. White  
 John A. Williams  
 Albert Wilson  
 Susan Wineke  
 Rich Yukubousky  
 Leon J. Zornes  
 Anne Zubko

**Corporate Renewals**

American Building Maintenance Co.  
 Captain's Nautical Supply, Inc.  
 Danigold, Inc.  
 Gogerty & Stark  
 Kerry Investment Company  
 McCaw Cellular Communications  
 PSF Industries, Inc.  
 Seattle Steam Company  
 Simpson Investment Co.  
 Sprague - Israel, Inc.

**New Members**

R. J. Alexander  
 James apRoberts  
 Daniel Becker  
 Harolynne Bobis  
 Helen Brumbach  
 Kathleen Budinick  
 David Byers  
 Linda J. Clifton  
 Brian F. Doennebrink  
 Rima Ellard  
 Mary Claire Frazier  
 Sandra Fredric  
 Edward George  
 Phil Gibson  
 Thomas J. Ginthner  
 Thomas Goldstein  
 Norma Jean Hanson  
 Donald S. Haviland  
 Kiku Hayashi  
 Jan Hubbard  
 Fred Kiga  
 Tim Mason  
 Don McDonough  
 Neil McReynolds  
 Susan Oxholm  
 Kevin Peck  
 John Pinette  
 Stephanie Saad  
 Chris Snell  
 Ed Snelling  
 Patrick Someone  
 David Stensby  
 Tom Swett  
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 Sue Tupper

The Municipal League of King County  
 810 Third Avenue, Suite 604  
 Seattle, WA 98104-1651  
 (206) 622-8333 • office  
 (206) 684-9676 • fax  
 <munileague@igc.apc.org> • e-mail

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